CD 2005--53

FACULTY of MUSIC
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Thursday, November 10, 2005
12:10 pm, Walter Hall

Thursdays at Noon
presents

John Kruspe, piano

"Notturno" No. 2 of *Soirées Musicales,* op. 6 — Clara Wieck-Schumann

Novelette, Op. 21 No. 8 — Robert Schumann

Fantasy Op. 17 in C major
Durchaus phantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen
Mäßig - Durchaus energisch
Langsam getragen - Durchweg leise zu halten

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Next on Thursdays at Noon
November 17, 2005
Toronto Wind Quintet with Midori Koga and Fraser Jackson
Beethoven Quintet, Op. 16
Martinu Sextet

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PROGRAM NOTES

The story of Robert and Clara Schumann, of her father's determination to thwart their relationship, of their eventual marriage and life together, of musical ciphers and subtexts and a cast of characters real and imaginary embedded in his music – all of these things form a necessary introduction to today's program, for the three works have stories to tell.

We begin with a lovely little work written by Clara at the astonishing age of sixteen – a less heralded achievement than the seventeen-year-old Felix Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, certainly, but polished, imaginative and convincing.

Robert apparently thought very highly of the *Notturno*, and when they were separated from each other, he was moved to include it in his own work, as we see in the *Novelette*. Actually somewhat of a *pastiche* of a couple of shorter pieces, it uses the opening descending line (A-G-F-E-D) of the *Notturno* as a central feature: in inversion at the beginning of the piece, in a turbulent and breathless rush; later, ghostly and distant (Schumann writes in the music 'voice from afar'), as the accompaniment is disappearing into the sunset, both of these occurrences in different keys from her original; a soliloquy, as he improvises on it; and one last time, desperately crying out, full-throated and sonorous, quoting her exact pitches and harmonies. The dancing D major that occupies much of the second half of the piece calms the earlier turbulence, reflecting to a certain extent the improving real-life fortunes of the two young protagonists.

The *Fantasie* began life in 1836 as a single-movement piece which was to be titled 'Ruins', a 'deep lament' for Clara. It evolved into a three-movement 'Sonata for Beethoven' (the added movements were similarly to be labelled 'Trophies' and 'Palms'), coincident with the raising of funds for a monument in Bonn; the Beethoven connection would seem to be a logical one because a phrase from the last song from Beethoven's cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* ('To the distant belovèd') had formed an integral part of the composition of the first movement, and emerges as a direct quote in the movement's final measures.

Schumann includes another allusion to Beethoven in the last movement, from a favourite work of his and Clara's: the famous second movement of the seventh symphony, the pervasive, swaying triplets and melody which, again, as in the first movement, originate as an inspiration for its conception but ends up as its whole being.

But leaving Beethoven's music aside and returning to Clara's, we again encounter her *Notturno* in this sprawling work: her opening *motif,* similar to the *An die ferne Geliebte* phrase in its stepwise movement and dotted rhythm, is quoted in the opening measures and numerous times throughout the first movement and in many imaginative ways in the remainder.

In the published version (dedicated, ironically, to Liszt), the titles disappeared, but there remains an enigmatic verse from Schlegel:

Durch alle Töne tönet	Through all the notes that vibrate
Im bunten Erdentraum	In earth's many-colored dream
Ein leiser Ton gezogen	One whispered note is sounding
Für den der heimlich lauschet.	For ears intent to hear.

BIOGRAPHY

Pianist **John Kruspe** studied with Douglas Bodle and Anton Kuerti. A University of Toronto Faculty of Music graduate, he is a member of the teaching staff in the Theory and Composition division.